

The Ad Hoc Committee on Best Practices in Municipal Decision Making.

Minutes of June 4, 2008.

Present: Bob Reckman, Alex Ghiselin, David Narkewicz, Jim Palermo, Lisa DePiano, Michael Bardsley and Wendy Foxmyn. Joel Russell was present at our request. The public participants were Jesus Leyva, S. Enz, Robert Setka and Jeanne Reed. The meeting was taped by NCTV for future broadcast.

The meeting began at 6:00 PM in the hearing room on the 2nd floor of City Hall. Wendy Foxmyn served as the facilitator. Wendy posted the agenda on the wall. Lisa DePiano agreed to serve as stacker. The large pages from the public forum were posted on the walls of the hearing room.

The minutes of our meeting of May 9 were accepted.

Joel Russell then spoke about the complexity and variety of decisions that Cities must make. He passed out "Some Notes on Best Practices" which lists various principals to be included and they types of decisions and what different combination of best practices might be best in each. David will scan this and put it on the web site. Joel then moved on to a discussion of the proposal of the Notre Dame Architecture Department to provide a design charette for the City in the fall. Professor Bess of Notre Dame was in town on Monday and Tuesday speaking to a number of groups about this proposal. Joel saw several reasons to take advantage of this opportunity, including the expertise of the group and the value to the community.

David Narkewicz asked several questions about the team and the product which Joel answered.

Bob Reckman provided some additional details about Professor Bess' time in Northampton and expressed his support for extending the invitation and volunteered to help raise the money necessary from a broad range of private sources.

Jesus Leyva expressed his skepticism about who would benefit. Joel responded by echoing his concern about distrust as a problem in the City and expressing his hope that this process might overcome some distrust.

Alex Ghiselin and Jim Palermo both expressed support for the idea with several caveats.

Michael Bardsley expressed his support for the idea and thought that Best Practices should take a role in making it happen. He thought the money should come from a wide range of sources and we should begin soon. There will also be a significant amount of logistics and publicity to be done shortly before they arrive.

Wendy Foxmyn spoke in favor of the idea and suggested that we might endorse the event since it would appear to be a fine example of best practices.

Wayne Feiden (Director of the Office of Planning and Development) arrived and provided some additional information about the process and how it might proceed. Katherine Baker (member of the Planning Board), who arrived late, also expressed her support for the project.

The BPC agreed that this is a worthwhile project and expressed its hopes that it would move forward. Joel was thanked for his input.

The committee agreed that we would continue our meeting until 8 PM.

Jim Palermo repeated his concern that we actually define best practices. He suggested that we pursue some case studies and expressed frustration that we spend more time on process than substance.

Lisa DePiano reported on the working group meeting that happened to process the results of the public forum on May 13. David Narkewicz has prepared minutes of that meeting and took photos of the pages that are posted on our web site. Alex Ghiselin expressed his hope that we would be able to hold onto the people who came to the forum as our core group who will remain involved in our discussion. David suggested that we invite those who gave us e-mail addresses to join the Goggle Group. This suggestion got widespread support. David also suggested that we will need to have additional public forums. Wendy said that the process of taking the information off of the sheets had been very useful to her and she encouraged members of the committee to look carefully at the results. Joel suggested that we try to get the information back to the public as soon as possible. We agreed that the working group would make a summary proposal to us before our next meeting. We understand that the open meeting law must be observed. The working group will post its meeting and distribute the results to the committee before our next meeting. Individual members of the working group are encouraged to prepare their own document before the meeting. The members of the working group are Jim Palermo, Lisa DePiano and S. Enz. Other members of the committee are encouraged to submit their own summaries to the working group if they like.

David and Bob will serve on a subcommittee to investigate best practices in other communities. They will try to engage some other citizens to assist them.

Alex will investigate public meeting spaces in the City. He will locate a site for our next meeting. Jesus Leyva will help him out.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00.

Respectfully submitted by Bob Reckman